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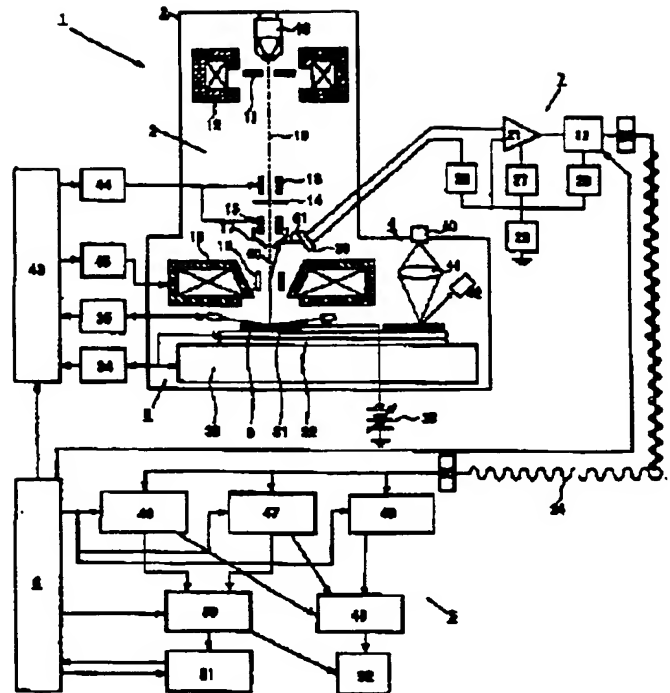
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TITLE : METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR
INSPECTION OF CIRCUIT PATTERN



ABSTRACT : PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED: To provide a method and an apparatus in which the contents of a detected defect part can be detected at high speed and with high accuracy, without increasing the inspection time of the defect content.

SOLUTION: Electron-beam images in a first region, a second region and a third region which comprise mutually identical design patterns on the surface of a substrate 9 to be inspected are acquired sequentially so as to be stored temporarily in a first image storage part 46, a second image storage part 47 and a third image storage part 48. Stored image data on the first region and the second region are compared and computed by a comparison and computing part 50. When the difference between both image data is larger than a prescribed value, a defect judgment and processing part 51 judges that any one of both regions contains a pattern defect, and both image data are sent to a fourth image storage part 49 so as to be stored and retained. Then, stored image data on the second region and the third region are compared and computed by the comparison and computing part 50. When the difference between both image data is larger than a prescribed value, the defect judgment and processing part 51 decides and judges that a pattern defect exists truly in the second region.

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